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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 001648

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EU](#) [BK](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ON BOSNIA

REF: STATE 113894

Classified By: Econ/Pol Counselor Dean Yap. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Austria recognizes the deteriorating political situation in Bosnia, but believes that to redress the situation, Bosnian leaders must take on real political responsibility, which requires terminating the OHR and a transition to the EUSR. The 2010 elections appear to set the outer limits for the transition period, though the Austrians deny working to any timeline. The GoA will largely be guided by OHR Lajcak's assessment of when the 5 2 PIC agenda has been fulfilled. Austria agrees that Bonn powers should not be delegated to the EUSR and that constitutional reform, though necessary in the long run, is not appropriate now.
End Summary.

¶2. (C) Econ/Pol Couns met 11/10 with Austrian MFA Office Director for the Western Balkans, Thomas Schnoell, to discuss USG concerns raised in reftel. Schnoell acknowledged the deteriorating political climate in Bosnia, noting that until June the EU had been optimistic, especially in light of the agreement reached on policing. Thus, what Schnoell described as a sobering presentation by OHR Lajcak to the EU in July had come as something of a shock. The EU now recognized that it had allowed its focus on Kosovo to distract it from Bosnia. Schnoell analyzed the present situation as arising from the lack of real political responsibility enjoyed by the Bosnian entities, who preferred to take extremist position to please their constituents and use the OHR as the scapegoat for the country's failings. Thus, Austria considered a transition to the EUSR, with no Bonn powers, he emphasized, as critical to changing the political dynamic and allowing for a further progressive evolution of the Dayton framework.

¶3. (C) Schnoell reported that Austria and, he thought, most other EU member states, would follow "the Lacjak line" with regard to the implementation of the 5 2 agenda. He described this as entailing a "not too strict" interpretation of successful implementation of the agenda. This was important to avoid the sort of prolonged impasse that maintaining a strict line on the policing agreement had created and to ensure continued Russian support for the PIC process. Schnoell argued that the "not too strict" position would guide internal decision-making in the PIC and EU, but not be made public so as to avoid giving an impression of weakness. E/P Counselor challenged the possibility of keeping such an "internal" decision secret. Schnoell also reported that, except for the UK, which clearly favored a strong line, EU members were not focusing on the terms for a PIC decision in February, but rather on the conditions for the transition.

¶4. (C) Schnoell said Austria supported the Solana-Rehn proposal to have all EU preparations for the OHR to EUSR transition completed by mid-2009. E/P Counselor challenged thinking in terms of timelines, Schnoell appeared to backtrack, but also said that if the transition were to slip beyond 2010, the Bosnian election campaign would focus on the OHR and politicians would again take destabilizing, extreme nationalist positions. Schnoell also reported that he did not expect the EU to make constitutional reform a

pre-condition for the EU-Bosnia Stabilization and Association Agreement.

¶5. (C) Comment: E/P Counselor took away from the meeting the strong sense that Austria, recognizing EU internal inefficiencies, is focusing much more on being ready for the transition in a logistical as well as political sense than on ensuring that conditions for the transition and EUSR are as good as possible. End Comment.

GIRARD-DICARLO